

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY



From the INTERNATIONAL SEARCHING AUTHORITY

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF TRANSMITTAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT OR THE DECLARATION

(PCT Rule 44.1)

To:
SHIGA PATENT OFFICE
Attn. Shiga, Fujiya
Ekisaikai Bldg., 1-29, Akashi-cho
Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0044
JAPAN

Date of mailing
(day/month/year) **22/01/2002**

Applicant's or agent's file reference
P01NM-027W0

FOR FURTHER ACTION See paragraphs 1 and 4 below

International application No.
PCT/JP 01/ 05284

International filing date
(day/month/year) **20/06/2001**

Applicant

NISSAN MOTOR CO., LTD

1. ☐ The applicant is hereby notified that the International Search Report has been established and is transmitted herewith.

Filing of amendments and statement under Article 19:

The applicant is entitled, if he so wishes, to amend the claims of the International Application (see Rule 46):

When? The time limit for filing such amendments is normally 2 months from the date of transmittal of the International Search Report; however, for more details, see the notes on the accompanying sheet.

Where? Directly to the International Bureau of WIPO
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35

For more detailed instructions, see the notes on the accompanying sheet.

2. ☒ The applicant is hereby notified that no International Search Report will be established and that the declaration under Article 17(2)(a) to that effect is transmitted herewith.

3. ☐ With regard to the protest against payment of (an) additional fee(s) under Rule 40.2, the applicant is notified that:

☐ the protest together with the decision thereon has been transmitted to the International Bureau together with the applicant's request to forward the texts of both the protest and the decision thereon to the designated Offices.

☐ no decision has been made yet on the protest; the applicant will be notified as soon as a decision is made.

4. **Further action(s):** The applicant is reminded of the following:

Shortly after 18 months from the priority date, the international application will be published by the International Bureau. If the applicant wishes to avoid or postpone publication, a notice of withdrawal of the international application, or of the priority claim, must reach the International Bureau as provided in Rules 90bis.1 and 90bis.3, respectively, before the completion of the technical preparations for international publication.

Within 19 months from the priority date, a demand for international preliminary examination must be filed if the applicant wishes to postpone the entry into the national phase until 30 months from the priority date (in some Offices even later).

Within 20 months from the priority date, the applicant must perform the prescribed acts for entry into the national phase before all designated Offices which have not been elected in the demand or in a later election within 19 months from the priority date or could not be elected because they are not bound by Chapter II.

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority



European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL-2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)


Applicant's or agent's file reference P01NM-027W0	IMPORTANT DECLARATION	Date of mailing(day/month/year) 22/01/2002
International application No. PCT/JP 01/ 05284	International filing date(day/month/year) 20/06/2001	(Earliest) Priority date(day/month/year) 21/06/2000
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC G06F17/60		
Applicant NISSAN MOTOR CO., LTD		

This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that no international search report will be established on the international application for the reasons indicated below

1. ☒ The subject matter of the international application relates to:
 - a. ☐ scientific theories.
 - b. ☐ mathematical theories
 - c. ☐ plant varieties.
 - d. ☐ animal varieties.
 - e. ☐ essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
 - f. ☒ schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
 - g. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
 - h. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
 - i. ☐ methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
 - j. ☐ methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
 - k. ☐ diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
 - l. ☐ mere presentations of information.
 - m. ☐ computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.
2. ☐ The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

☐ the description
 ☐ the claims
 ☐ the drawings
3. ☐ The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
 ☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
4. Further comments:

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority  European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer
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NOTES TO FORM PCT/ISA/220

These Notes are intended to give the basic instructions concerning the filing of amendments under article 19. The Notes are based on the requirements of the Patent Cooperation Treaty, the Regulations and the Administrative Instructions under that Treaty. In case of discrepancy between these Notes and those requirements, the latter are applicable. For more detailed information, see also the PCT Applicant's Guide, a publication of WIPO.

In these Notes, "Article", "Rule", and "Section" refer to the provisions of the PCT, the PCT Regulations and the PCT Administrative Instructions, respectively.

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING AMENDMENTS UNDER ARTICLE 19

The applicant has, after having received the international search report, one opportunity to amend the claims of the international application. It should however be emphasized that, since all parts of the international application (claims, description and drawings) may be amended during the international preliminary examination procedure, there is usually no need to file amendments of the claims under Article 19 except where, e.g. the applicant wants the latter to be published for the purposes of provisional protection or has another reason for amending the claims before international publication. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that provisional protection is available in some States only.

What parts of the international application may be amended?

Under Article 19, only the claims may be amended.

During the international phase, the claims may also be amended (or further amended) under Article 34 before the International Preliminary Examining Authority. The description and drawings may only be amended under Article 34 before the International Examining Authority.

Upon entry into the national phase, all parts of the international application may be amended under Article 28 or, where applicable, Article 41.

When?

Within 2 months from the date of transmittal of the international search report or 16 months from the priority date, whichever time limit expires later. It should be noted, however, that the amendments will be considered as having been received on time if they are received by the International Bureau after the expiration of the applicable time limit but before the completion of the technical preparations for international publication (Rule 46.1).

Where not to file the amendments?

The amendments may only be filed with the International Bureau and not with the receiving Office or the International Searching Authority (Rule 46.2).

Where a demand for international preliminary examination has been/is filed, see below.

How?

Either by cancelling one or more entire claims, by adding one or more new claims or by amending the text of one or more of the claims as filed.

A replacement sheet must be submitted for each sheet of the claims which, on account of an amendment or amendments, differs from the sheet originally filed.

All the claims appearing on a replacement sheet must be numbered in Arabic numerals. Where a claim is cancelled, no renumbering of the other claims is required. In all cases where claims are renumbered, they must be renumbered consecutively (Administrative Instructions, Section 205(b)).

The amendments must be made in the language in which the international application is to be published.

What documents must/may accompany the amendments?

Letter (Section 205(b)):

The amendments must be submitted with a letter.

The letter will not be published with the international application and the amended claims. It should not be confused with the "Statement under Article 19(1)" (see below, under "Statement under Article 19(1)").

The letter must be in English or French, at the choice of the applicant. However, if the language of the international application is English, the letter must be in English; if the language of the international application is French, the letter must be in French.

NOTES TO FORM PCT/ISA/220 (continued)

The letter must indicate the differences between the claims as filed and the claims as amended. It must, in particular, indicate, in connection with each claim appearing in the international application (it being understood that identical indications concerning several claims may be grouped), whether

- (i) the claim is unchanged;
- (ii) the claim is cancelled;
- (iii) the claim is new;
- (iv) the claim replaces one or more claims as filed;
- (v) the claim is the result of the division of a claim as filed.

The following examples illustrate the manner in which amendments must be explained in the accompanying letter:

1. [Where originally there were 48 claims and after amendment of some claims there are 51]:
"Claims 1 to 29, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37 to 48 replaced by amended claims bearing the same numbers; claims 30, 33 and 36 unchanged; new claims 49 to 51 added."
2. [Where originally there were 15 claims and after amendment of all claims there are 11]:
"Claims 1 to 15 replaced by amended claims 1 to 11."
3. [Where originally there were 14 claims and the amendments consist in cancelling some claims and in adding new claims]:
"Claims 1 to 6 and 14 unchanged; claims 7 to 13 cancelled; new claims 15, 16 and 17 added," or
"Claims 7 to 13 cancelled; new claims 15, 16 and 17 added; all other claims unchanged."
4. [Where various kinds of amendments are made]:
"Claims 1-10 unchanged; claims 11 to 13, 18 and 19 cancelled; claims 14, 15 and 16 replaced by amended claim 14; claim 17 subdivided into amended claims 15, 16 and 17; new claims 20 and 21 added."

"Statement under article 19(1)" (Rule 46.4)

The amendments may be accompanied by a statement explaining the amendments and indicating any impact that such amendments might have on the description and the drawings (which cannot be amended under Article 19(1)).

The statement will be published with the international application and the amended claims.

It must be in the language in which the international application is to be published.

It must be brief, not exceeding 500 words if in English or if translated into English.

It should not be confused with and does not replace the letter indicating the differences between the claims as filed and as amended. It must be filed on a separate sheet and must be identified as such by a heading, preferably by using the words "Statement under Article 19(1)."

It may not contain any disparaging comments on the international search report or the relevance of citations contained in that report. Reference to citations, relevant to a given claim, contained in the international search report may be made only in connection with an amendment of that claim.

Consequence if a demand for international preliminary examination has already been filed

If, at the time of filing any amendments and any accompanying statement, under Article 19, a demand for international preliminary examination has already been submitted, the applicant must preferably, at the time of filing the amendments (and any statement) with the International Bureau, also file with the International Preliminary Examining Authority a copy of such amendments (and of any statement) and, where required, a translation of such amendments for the procedure before that Authority (see Rules 55.3(a) and 62.2, first sentence). For further information, see the Notes to the demand form (PCT/IPEA/401).

Consequence with regard to translation of the international application for entry into the national phase

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that, upon entry into the national phase, a translation of the claims as amended under Article 19 may have to be furnished to the designated/elected Offices, instead of, or in addition to, the translation of the claims as filed.

For further details on the requirements of each designated/elected Office, see Volume II of the PCT Applicant's Guide.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The claims relate to subject matter for which no search is required according to Rule 39 PCT. Given that the claims are formulated in terms of such subject matter or merely specify commonplace features relating to its technological implementation, the search examiner could not establish any technical problem which might potentially have required an inventive step to overcome. Hence it was not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art (Art. 17(2)(a)(i) and (ii) PCT; see Guidelines Part B Chapter VIII, 1-6).

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF
RECORD COPY

(PCT Rule 24.2(a))

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

SHIGA, Fujiya
c/o Shiga Patent Office
Ekisaikai Bldg., 1-29, Akashi-cho
Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0044
JAPON



Date of mailing (day/month/year) 24 July 2001 (24.07.01)	IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION
Applicant's or agent's file reference P01NM-027WO	International application No. PCT/JP01/05284

The applicant is hereby notified that the International Bureau has received the record copy of the international application as detailed below.

Name(s) of the applicant(s) and State(s) for which they are applicants:

NISSAN MOTOR CO., LTD. (for all designated States except US)
HOSHI, Masato (for US)

International filing date : 20 June 2001 (20.06.01)

Priority date(s) claimed : 21 June 2000 (21.06.00)

Date of receipt of the record copy
by the International Bureau : 06 July 2001 (06.07.01)

List of designated Offices :

EP : AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR
National : CN, KR, US

ATTENTION

The applicant should carefully check the data appearing in this Notification. In case of any discrepancy between these data and the indications in the international application, the applicant should immediately inform the International Bureau.

In addition, the applicant's attention is drawn to the information contained in the Annex, relating to:

- ☒ time limits for entry into the national phase
☒ confirmation of precautionary designations
☐ requirements regarding priority documents

A copy of this Notification is being sent to the receiving Office and to the International Searching Authority.

The International Bureau of WIPO
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Facsimile No. (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer:

Susumu Kubo

Telephone No. (41-22) 338.83.38

INFORMATION ON TIME LIMITS FOR ENTERING THE NATIONAL PHASE

The applicant is reminded that the "national phase" must be entered before each of the designated Offices indicated in the Notification of Receipt of Record Copy (Form PCT/IB/301) by paying national fees and furnishing translations, as prescribed by the applicable national laws.

The time limit for performing these procedural acts is **20 MONTHS** from the priority date or, for those designated States which the applicant elects in a demand for international preliminary examination or in a later election, **30 MONTHS** from the priority date, provided that the election is made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date. Some designated (or elected) Offices have fixed time limits which expire even later than 20 or 30 months from the priority date. In other Offices an extension of time or grace period, in some cases upon payment of an additional fee, is available.

In addition to these procedural acts, the applicant may also have to comply with other special requirements applicable in certain Offices. **It is the applicant's responsibility** to ensure that the necessary steps to enter the national phase are taken in a timely fashion. Most designated Offices do not issue reminders to applicants in connection with the entry into the national phase.

For detailed information about the procedural acts to be performed to enter the national phase before each designated Office, the applicable time limits and possible extensions of time or grace periods, and any other requirements, see the relevant Chapters of Volume II of the PCT Applicant's Guide. Information about the requirements for filing a demand for international preliminary examination is set out in Chapter IX of Volume I of the PCT Applicant's Guide.

GR and ES became bound by PCT Chapter II on 7 September 1996 and 6 September 1997, respectively, and may, therefore, be elected in a demand or a later election filed on or after 7 September 1996 and 6 September 1997, respectively, regardless of the filing date of the international application. (See second paragraph above.)

Note that only an applicant who is a national or resident of a PCT Contracting State which is bound by Chapter II has the right to file a demand for international preliminary examination.

CONFIRMATION OF PRECAUTIONARY DESIGNATIONS

This notification lists only specific designations made under Rule 4.9(a) in the request. It is important to check that these designations are correct. Errors in designations can be corrected where precautionary designations have been made under Rule 4.9(b). The applicant is hereby reminded that any precautionary designations may be confirmed according to Rule 4.9(c) before the expiration of 15 months from the priority date. If it is not confirmed, it will automatically be regarded as withdrawn by the applicant. There will be no reminder and no invitation. Confirmation of a designation consists of the filing of a notice specifying the designated State concerned (with an indication of the kind of protection or treatment desired) and the payment of the designation and confirmation fees. Confirmation must reach the receiving Office within the 15-month time limit.

REQUIREMENTS REGARDING PRIORITY DOCUMENTS

For applicants who have not yet complied with the requirements regarding priority documents, the following is recalled.

Where the priority of an earlier national, regional or international application is claimed, the applicant must submit a copy of the said earlier application, certified by the authority with which it was filed ("the priority document") to the receiving Office (which will transmit it to the International Bureau) or directly to the International Bureau, before the expiration of 16 months from the priority date, provided that any such priority document may still be submitted to the International Bureau before that date of international publication of the international application, in which case that document will be considered to have been received by the International Bureau on the last day of the 16-month time limit (Rule 17.1(a)).

Where the priority document is issued by the receiving Office, the applicant may, instead of submitting the priority document, request the receiving Office to prepare and transmit the priority document to the International Bureau. Such request must be made before the expiration of the 16-month time limit and may be subjected by the receiving Office to the payment of a fee (Rule 17.1(b)).

If the priority document concerned is not submitted to the International Bureau or if the request to the receiving Office to prepare and transmit the priority document has not been made (and the corresponding fee, if any, paid) within the applicable time limit indicated under the preceding paragraphs, any designated State may disregard the priority claim, provided that no designated Office may disregard the priority claim concerned before giving the applicant an opportunity to furnish the priority document within a time limit which is reasonable under the circumstances.

Where several priorities are claimed, the priority date to be considered for the purposes of computing the 16-month time limit is the filing date of the earliest application whose priority is claimed.

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

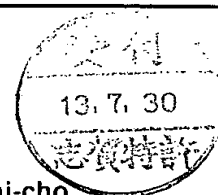
NOTIFICATION CONCERNING
SUBMISSION OR TRANSMITTAL
OF PRIORITY DOCUMENT

(PCT Administrative Instructions, Section 411)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

SHIGA, Fujiya
c/o Shiga Patent Office
Ekisaikai Bldg., 1-29, Akashi-cho
Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0044
JAPON



J. M.

Date of mailing (day/month/year) 24 July 2001 (24.07.01)	IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION
Applicant's or agent's file reference P01NM-027WO	
International application No. PCT/JP01/05284	
International publication date (day/month/year) Not yet published	
Applicant NISSAN MOTOR CO., LTD. et al	International filing date (day/month/year) 20 June 2001 (20.06.01) Priority date (day/month/year) 21 June 2000 (21.06.00)

- The applicant is hereby notified of the date of receipt (except where the letters "NR" appear in the right-hand column) by the International Bureau of the priority document(s) relating to the earlier application(s) indicated below. Unless otherwise indicated by an asterisk appearing next to a date of receipt, or by the letters "NR", in the right-hand column, the priority document concerned was submitted or transmitted to the International Bureau in compliance with Rule 17.1(a) or (b).
- This updates and replaces any previously issued notification concerning submission or transmittal of priority documents.
- An asterisk(*) appearing next to a date of receipt, in the right-hand column, denotes a priority document submitted or transmitted to the International Bureau but not in compliance with Rule 17.1(a) or (b). In such a case, **the attention of the applicant is directed** to Rule 17.1(c) which provides that no designated Office may disregard the priority claim concerned before giving the applicant an opportunity, upon entry into the national phase, to furnish the priority document within a time limit which is reasonable under the circumstances.
- The letters "NR" appearing in the right-hand column denote a priority document which was not received by the International Bureau or which the applicant did not request the receiving Office to prepare and transmit to the International Bureau, as provided by Rule 17.1(a) or (b), respectively. In such a case, **the attention of the applicant is directed** to Rule 17.1(c) which provides that no designated Office may disregard the priority claim concerned before giving the applicant an opportunity, upon entry into the national phase, to furnish the priority document within a time limit which is reasonable under the circumstances.

<u>Priority date</u>	<u>Priority application No.</u>	<u>Country or regional Office or PCT receiving Office</u>	<u>Date of receipt of priority document</u>
21 June 2000 (21.06.00)	2000-186253	JP	06 July 2001 (06.07.01)

The International Bureau of WIPO
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Facsimile No. (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer

Susumu Kubo

Telephone No. (41-22) 338.83.38

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

NOTICE INFORMING THE APPLICANT OF THE
COMMUNICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
APPLICATION TO THE DESIGNATED OFFICES

(PCT Rule 47.1(c), first sentence)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

SHIGA, Fujiya
c/o Shiga Patent Office
Ekisaikai Bldg., 1-29, Akashi-cho
Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0044
JAPON



Date of mailing (day/month/year) 27 December 2001 (27.12.01)		
Applicant's or agent's file reference P01NM-027WO		
International application No. PCT/JP01/05284	International filing date (day/month/year) 20 June 2001 (20.06.01)	Priority date (day/month/year) 21 June 2000 (21.06.00)
Applicant NISSAN MOTOR CO., LTD. et al		

IMPORTANT NOTICE

1. Notice is hereby given that the International Bureau has **communicated**, as provided in Article 20, the international application to the following designated Offices on the date indicated above as the date of mailing of this notice:

KR,US

In accordance with Rule 47.1(c), third sentence, those Offices will accept the present notice as conclusive evidence that the communication of the international application has duly taken place on the date of mailing indicated above and no copy of the international application is required to be furnished by the applicant to the designated Office(s).

2. The following designated Offices have waived the requirement for such a communication at this time:

CN,EP

The communication will be made to those Offices only upon their request. Furthermore, those Offices do not require the applicant to furnish a copy of the international application (Rule 49.1(a-bis)).

3. Enclosed with this notice is a copy of the international application as published by the International Bureau on 27 December 2001 (27.12.01) under No. WO 01/98976

REMINDER REGARDING CHAPTER II (Article 31(2)(a) and Rule 54.2)

If the applicant wishes to postpone entry into the national phase until 30 months (or later in some Offices) from the priority date, a **demand for international preliminary examination** must be filed with the competent International Preliminary Examining Authority before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date.

It is the applicant's sole responsibility to monitor the 19-month time limit.

Note that only an applicant who is a national or resident of a PCT Contracting State which is bound by Chapter II has the right to file a demand for international preliminary examination (at present, all PCT Contracting States are bound by Chapter II).

REMINDER REGARDING ENTRY INTO THE NATIONAL PHASE (Article 22 or 39(1))

If the applicant wishes to proceed with the international application in the **national phase**, he must, within 20 months or 30 months, or later in some Offices, perform the acts referred to therein before each designated or elected Office.

For further important information on the time limits and acts to be performed for entering the national phase, see the Annex to Form PCT/IB/301 (Notification of Receipt of Record Copy) and the PCT Applicant's Guide, Volume II.

The International Bureau of WIPO 34, chemin des Colombettes 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland	Authorized officer J. Zahra
Facsimile No. (41-22) 740.14.35	Telephone No. (41-22) 338.91.11

REVISED VERSION

10/069063

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
27 December 2001 (27.12.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/098976 A2

- (51) International Patent Classification⁷: **G06F 17/60**
- (21) International Application Number: **PCT/JP01/05284**
- (22) International Filing Date: **20 June 2001 (20.06.2001)**
- (25) Filing Language: **English**
- (26) Publication Language: **English**
- (30) Priority Data:
2000-186253 **21 June 2000 (21.06.2000)** **JP**
- (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **NISSAN MOTOR CO., LTD.** [JP/JP]; 2, Takara-cho, Kanagawa-ku, Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa 221-0023 (JP).
- (72) Inventor; and
- (75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): **HOSHI, Masato** [JP/JP]; 5-7-2, Oi, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo 140-0014 (JP).
- (74) Agent: **SHIGA, Fujiya**; c/o Shiga Patent Office, Ekisaikai Bldg., 1-29, Akashi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0044 (JP).
- (81) Designated States (national): **CN, KR, US.**
- (84) Designated States (regional): **European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR).**
- Published:
— with declaration under Article 17(2)(a); without abstract;
title not checked by the International Searching Authority
- (48) Date of publication of this revised version:
19 September 2002
- (15) Information about Correction:
see PCT Gazette No. 38/2002 of 19 September 2002, Section II
- For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.



WO 01/098976 A2

(54) Title: **CUSTOMER INFORMATION CONTROL SYSTEM AND METHOD**

(57) Abstract:

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)

Applicant's or agent's file reference P01NM-027WO	IMPORTANT DECLARATION	Date of mailing(day/month/year) 22/01/2002
International application No. PCT/JP 01/ 05284	International filing date(day/month/year) 20/06/2001	(Earliest) Priority date(day/month/year) 21/06/2000
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC		G06F17/60
Applicant NISSAN MOTOR CO., LTD		

This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that no international search report will be established on the international application for the reasons indicated below

1. ☒ The subject matter of the international application relates to:

- a. ☐ scientific theories.
- b. ☐ mathematical theories
- c. ☐ plant varieties.
- d. ☐ animal varieties.
- e. ☐ essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
- f. ☒ schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
- g. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
- h. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
- i. ☐ methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
- j. ☐ methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
- k. ☐ diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
- l. ☐ mere presentations of information.
- m. ☐ computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.

2. ☐ The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

- ☐ the description ☐ the claims ☐ the drawings

3. ☐ The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:


- ☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

4. Further comments:

GROUP 3600

OCT 20 2002

RECEIVED

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority  European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer M. Rodríguez Nóvoa
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FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The claims relate to subject matter for which no search is required according to Rule 39 PCT. Given that the claims are formulated in terms of such subject matter or merely specify commonplace features relating to its technological implementation, the search examiner could not establish any technical problem which might potentially have required an inventive step to overcome. Hence it was not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art (Art. 17(2)(a)(i) and (ii) PCT; see Guidelines Part B Chapter VIII, 1-6).

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.

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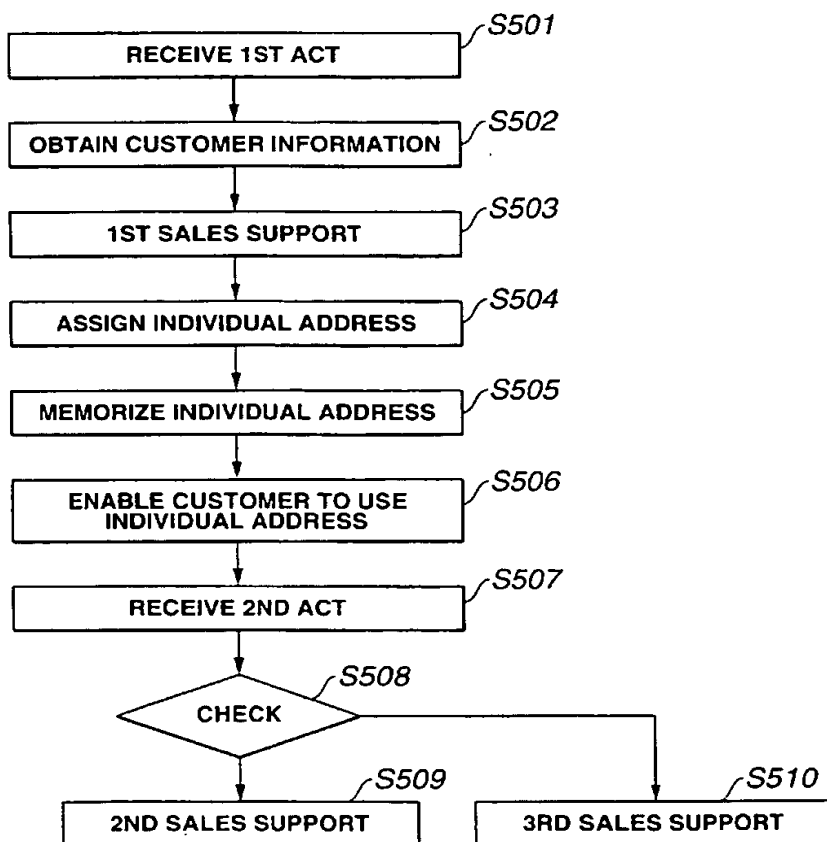
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(54) Title: **CUSTOMER INFORMATION CONTROL SYSTEM AND METHOD**



(57) Abstract: A customer-specific address is assigned in response to an order message, for a customer to use for cancellation of sales contract or other act. A subsequent email message, if received, is examined to determine whether a destination address of the subsequent email message is in agreement with the customer-specific address stored in a memory section.

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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

DESCRIPTION

CUSTOMER INFORMATION CONTROL SYSTEM AND METHOD

Technical Field

- 5 **[0001]** The present invention relates to systems, methods, products, media and/or programs for sales support and customer information control for sale of goods such as automobiles and services, and other business activities, or transaction.

10 **Background Art**

- [0002]** In the case of sale of automobiles in general, it takes considerable time from the conclusion of contract of sale to the delivery of an automobile. Accordingly, a sales management department determines scheduled delivery
15 dates for delivery of products, and notifies each contract customer who has contracted to buy a car, of a scheduled delivery date. If a contract customer cancels the sales contract, the scheduled delivery date for that customer is canceled and the subsequent scheduled delivery dates may
20 be advanced.

Disclosure of Invention

- [0003]** When email is used for cancellation of a sales contract, a sales contract might be canceled by a false email message. In such a case, the schedule of delivery
25 might be rearranged on the basis of a false cancellation, and the delivery of an automobile to a customer of the falsely canceled contract on the expected delivery date might become unfeasible.

- [0004]** It is an object of the present invention to provide
30 system, method, product, medium and/or program capable of verifying the authenticity of electronic messages.

- [0005]** According to the present invention, a customer information control system comprises: an address assigning section to assign an individual address to a customer, to
35 receive an electronic message from the customer; a

memory section to store the individual address; a communicating section to receive an electronic message from the customer; and a checking section to examine whether a destination address of the electronic message is in agreement with the individual address stored in the memory section.

[0006] A customer information control method according to the present invention comprises: assigning an individual address to a customer; memorizing the individual address; and examining a subsequent electronic message, if received, to determine whether a destination address of the subsequent electronic message is in agreement with the individual address memorized.

[0007] According to another aspect of the invention, a computer program for customer information control, comprises: a first program section of assigning an individual address in response to a computer-readable first electronic message; a second program section of memorizing the individual address; a third program section of enabling the customer to express a second act by using the individual address assigned to the customer; and a fourth program section of checking a destination address of a computer-readable second electronic message representing the second act, to determine whether the destination address is memorized as the individual address. An apparatus for customer information control according to the present invention may comprise: means for receiving information representing a first customer's message addressed from a customer to a vendor; means for assigning an individual address to the customer in response to the first customer's message; means for recording the individual address assigned to the customer; means for notifying the customer of the individual address; means for checking a second electronic message, if received, to determine whether a destination address of the second electronic message is recorded as the individual address;

means for performing a first responsive operation when the destination address is memorized as the individual address; and means for performing a second responsive operation when the destination address is not memorized as the customer-specific address. A transaction method may comprise: transmitting a first message for transaction to an online business site from a terminal; obtaining, from the online business site, an individual address uniquely assigned in response to the first message; sending a second message to the individual address; and receiving notification of acceptance of the second message from the online business site if a destination address of the second message is in agreement with the individual address assigned to the customer. A terminal apparatus may comprise: an input section to input customer information and purchase-related information; a communication section to transmit the customer information and the purchase-related information to a server through a communication network, and to obtain an individual address assigned uniquely to the terminal system; a process section to transmit an email message from a customer address to the individual address to express an act of the customer, and to receive a message to accept the email message only if the individual address is used as a destination address of the email message.

[0008] The other objects and features of this invention will become understood from the following description with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of Drawings

[0009] FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing a customer information control system according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

[0010] FIG. 2 is a flowchart showing a procedure of creating a special individual address in the customer information control system of FIG. 1.

[0011] FIG. 3 is a flowchart showing a procedure of determining scheduled delivery dates in the embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0012] FIGS. 4 and 5 are tables illustrating
5 rearrangement of scheduled delivery dates in the system of FIG. 1.

[0013] FIG. 6 is a flowchart showing a customer information control procedure in the system of FIG. 1.

[0014] FIG. 7 is a block diagram showing a server and
10 terminal system according to a second embodiment according to the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 8 is a block diagram showing a server and terminal system according to a variation of the second embodiment shown in FIG. 7.

[0016] FIG. 9 is a flowchart showing an estimate request
15 management procedure in the system according to the second embodiment.

[0017] FIG. 10 is a flowchart showing an assessment
20 request management procedure in the system according to the second embodiment.

[0018] FIG. 11 is a flowchart showing a credit calculation request management procedure in the system of FIG. 7.

[0019] FIG. 12 is a customer information control
25 procedure according to the second embodiment.

[0020] FIG. 13 is a flowchart showing a transaction control procedure according to the present invention.

Mode(s) for Carrying Out the Invention

[0021] A customer information control system 8
30 according to a first embodiment of the present invention is shown in FIG. 1. Customer information control system 8 of this example includes a communication section 1, a memory section 2, a register command section 3, a individual address creating (or assigning) section 4, a
35 confirmation section 5, a security checking section 6 and a distribution support section 7.

[0022] Communication section 1 can send and receive email through Internet 9 to and from customer's communication terminals (such as personal computers) 10.

[0023] Register command section 3 is connected with communication section 1 to receive therefrom a purchase email message (first or preceding message) from a customer to buy a car. When a purchase email message is received, register command section 3 stores, in memory section 2, a customer address which is an address of the customer mentioned in the purchase email message, and further stores a customer network path which is a network path from the terminal 10 of the customer to communication section 1. The customer network path is stored in association with the customer address.

[0024] Address creating section 4 creates a special individual address for use for communication from a contract customer who has agreed and contracted to buy a car, specifically to cancel the sales contract of the car. Address creating section 4 stores the created special individual address in memory section 2, and notifies the customer who has sent the purchase email message, of the individual address assigned to the customer, by sending, through communication section 1, an email message of address notification to the terminal 10 of the customer. In this case, the special individual address is entered as the sender address of the email message of the address notification.

[0025] Confirmation section 5 examines the contents of an email message (second or subsequent message) received through the communication section 1, and determines whether the email message is a message to cancel the contract. Information item as to whether the email message is a cancellation message to cancel the contract is stored in memory section 2 by confirmation section 5.

[0026] When a cancellation email message to cancel a contract is received, the security checking section 6 examines the destination address, the sender address and the network path of the cancellation email message for
5 cancellation, and determines whether a pair of the destination address and sender address of the email message is in agreement with a pair of the special individual address and the customer address stored in memory section 2, and whether the network path of the
10 cancellation email message from the starting terminal 10 to the communication section 1 is in agreement with the customer network path of the customer stored in memory section 2.

[0027] When the destination address and sender address
15 of the cancellation email message are stored as a pair of the special individual address and customer address in memory section 2, and at the same time the network path of the cancellation email message is identical to the customer network path of the customer stored in memory
20 section 2, then security checking section 6 stores the cancellation of the sales contract in memory section 2. When, on the other hand, the destination address and sender address of the email message are not stored as a pair of the special individual address and customer address
25 in memory section 2, or the network path of the email message is not stored as the customer network path of the customer in memory section 2, then security checking section 6 sends, to the terminal 10 from which the cancellation email message was sent, an email message to
30 notify non-acceptance of the sales cancellation.

[0028] Distribution support section (or sales support section) 7 determines a scheduled delivery date for each contract customer who has made a car sales contract, stores the scheduled delivery date for each contract
35 customer in memory section 2, and notifies each contract customer of the scheduled delivery date by sending an

email message to the terminal 10 of each contract customer from the communication section 1.

[0029] FIG. 2 shows a procedure by which the address creating section 4 creates a special individual address.

5 **[0030]** First, the number of characters used in a variable portion of a special individual address, the number of the kinds of characters used in the variable portion of the special individual address, and the kinds of characters used in the variable portion of the special individual address are
10 preliminarily determined (S21). For example, the number of characters is eight, the number of the kinds of characters is two and a character set is an alphanumeric character set containing one or more of the letters of alphabet and one or more of the decimal digits. Second,
15 letters and digits are selected randomly (S22). For example, the letters selected are a, d, g and k and the digits selected are 1, 3, 4 and 8. Third, by using the selected letters and digits, the variable portion of the special individual address is formed randomly (S23). For
20 example, the variable portion is "3dg84ak1", and the created special individual address is "3dg84ak1@nissan.co.jp". Fourth, it is determined whether the newly created special individual address is identical to any one of the existing addresses (S24). If the newly
25 created special individual address is already registered, then letters and digits are selected randomly again, and a new special individual address is created again. If, on the other hand, the newly created special individual address is identical to none of the existing individual addresses, then
30 the newly created special individual address is stored in memory section 2 (S25).

[0031] FIG. 3 shows a procedure by which distribution support section 7 determines a scheduled delivery date for each contract customer. First, when a sales contract is
35 completed (S31), a scheduled delivery date is determined, and the contract customer and the scheduled delivery date

are stored in memory section 2 (S32). Second, an email message is sent from communication section 1 to the terminal of the contract customer to notify the contract customer of the scheduled delivery date (S33). As shown in FIG. 4, this customer information control system determines scheduled delivery dates for contract customers A~F; stores, in memory section 2, the names and other information items of the contract customers A~F and their scheduled delivery dates; and sends email messages for notification of the respective scheduled delivery dates, to the terminals 10 of the contract customers A~F.

[0032] If one of the sales contracts is canceled by an email message (S34), and the cancellation is recorded in memory section 2, then the distribution support section 7 rearranges the scheduled delivery dates, records the altered delivery dates for the contract customers in memory section 2 and sends email messages to notify the contract customers of the respective altered delivery dates. If, for example, the contract of the customer D is canceled, then the distribution support section 7 determines the order of delivery and the altered delivery dates for the contract customer E and F, and records the altered delivery dates for the customers E and F in memory section 2, and sends email messages to terminals 10 of the customers E and F to notify the customers E and F of the respective altered delivery dates.

[0033] FIG. 6 shows a customer information control process performed by customer information control system 8 shown in FIG. 1.

[0034] When a purchase email message (first message) is received by communication section 1 from a terminal 10, register command section 3 performs a command operation to record the customer address, and the network path of the customer in connection with the customer address at step S61. After the customer address is stored in memory section 2, the address creating section 4 creates a special

individual address for the customer, and records the special individual address in memory section 2 at step S62. Then, at step S63, address creating section 4 sends an email message through communication section 1 to the terminal of the customer who has sent the purchase email message, to notify the customer of the individual address assigned to the customer. In this email message for notification of the individual address, the individual address is entered as a sender address.

10 **[0035]** If an email message is received by communication section 1 (and hence the answer of step S64 becomes affirmative), the confirmation section 5 checks the body of the email message and determines whether the email message is a cancellation message to
15 cancel the sales contract, at step S65. If the received email message has the contents to cancel the sales contract (and hence the answer of step S65 is affirmative), then the security checking section 6 examines the pair of the destination address and the sender address of the
20 received cancellation email message (second message), and the network path of the received cancellation email message at step S66 to determine whether the pair of the destination address and the sender address is recorded in memory section 2 as the pair of the special individual
25 address and the customer address, and whether the network path of the received cancellation email message is identical to the network path recorded in memory section 2 as the customer network path of the customer. When both conditions are met, security checking section 6 records the
30 cancellation of the sales contract in memory section 2.

[0036] When the cancellation of the sales contract is recorded in memory section 2, the distribution support section 7, at step S67, determines the alteration of the scheduled delivery dates, stores the altered scheduled
35 delivery dates in memory section 2, and sends email messages to notify contract customers of the altered

scheduled delivery dates from communication section 1 to terminals 10 of the contract customers.

[0037] When either or both of the two conditions is not satisfied, that is when the pair of the destination address and the sender address is not recorded in memory section 2 as the pair of the special individual address and the customer address, or when the network path of the received cancellation email message is not identical to the network path recorded in memory section 2 as the customer network path of the customer, then the security checking section 6 sends an email message to notify the customer who has sent the cancellation email message, that the requested cancellation is not entered, at step S69. When the received email message is not a cancellation message, the customer information control system 8 responds to the received email message by performing a responsive operation at step S68.

[0038] The check on destination address and sender address of an electronic message as a pair can significantly reduce the possibility of false cancellation, and verify an authentic cancellation message from a contract customer efficiently. Therefore, the customer information control system can rearrange the schedule of delivery securely. The further check on a network path of an electronic message by security checking section 6 further improves the reliability of the security check. In this embodiment, a special individual address is entered as a return address in an address notifying message. Therefore, a customer can readily send an electronic message to the special individual address by utilizing the feature of reply message in the email software without the need for inputting the individual address.

[0039] The customer information control system and method of the illustrated embodiment is designed to deal with sales of motor vehicles. However, the present invention is not limited to this. The present invention is

applicable to sale of other goods and services. In the illustrated embodiment, a special individual address is intended to be used to cancel a sales contract. However, the present invention is applicable to other acts besides
5 cancellation of contract. Moreover, a special individual address may be designed for use for a plurality of different acts. Security checking section 6 may be arranged to check a destination address alone instead of checking a pair of destination address and sender address. The
10 customer information control system may be arranged to accept an act, such as cancellation of contract, of an electronic message if disagreement between a pair of destination address and sender address and a pair of special individual address and customer address is small as
15 long as the network path of the electronic message is in agreement with the registered network pass of the customer. For example, as long as the network path of the electronic message is in agreement with the registered network pass of the customer, cancellation of a contract is
20 entered if a pair of destination address and sender address disagrees with a pair of special individual address and customer address only in one character.

[0040] FIG. 7 shows a customer information control system according to a second embodiment of the present
25 invention.

[0041] A server system 108 shown in FIG. 7 includes at least a communication section 151 for communication with one or more terminals 110 through a communication network 109, a processor section 152 for performing
30 various sales support operations, four storage sections 155, 156, 157 and 158 for product database (containing information about specifications and prices of products), used car database (containing information about market prices of used cars), customer database and credit
35 database, and a database input/output management section 153 for distribution of data between processor

section 152 and each database storage section. Terminal 110 is a computer system including an input section 110a, a communication section 110b, a display section 110c, a processor section 110d and a storage section 110e.

- 5 Terminal 110 may be a computer system of a customer or may be a computer system on the seller's side, for example, installed at a store of a retail dealer or a maker. For example, a computer system at a store of a retail dealer can be used as terminal 110 for estimate request (as shown
10 in FIG. 9), trade-in assessment (as in FIG. 10), and credit examination (as in FIG. 11).

[0042] FIG. 8 shows a variation of the second embodiment. In FIG. 8, a credit company system 121 controls credit database instead of a server system 108'.

- 15 Server system 108' is identical to server system 108 except that the credit database storage section 158 is eliminated. The credit company system 121 includes at least a communication section 171 for communication with server system 108', and one or more terminals 110 through
20 communication network 109, a processor section 172 for performing various operations as to credit examination and calculation, a storage section 177 for storing a credit database, and a data base input/output management section 173 for distribution of data between processor
25 section 172 and credit database storage section 177, like server system 108 of FIG. 7.

- [0043]** FIGS. 9, 10 and 11 show procedures for producing an estimate for merchandize, an assessment of a trade-in, and a credit examination report. The procedures
30 of FIGS. 9 and 10 can be performed by server system 108 of FIG. 7 or by server system 108' of FIG. 8. The procedure of FIG. 11 can be performed by server system 108 of FIG. 7 or credit company system 121 of FIG. 8 alone or in combination with server system 108'. The following
35 explanation takes server system 108 of FIG. 7 as an example for explanation.

[0044] In the example of FIG. 9, the procedure is for sale of motor vehicles. Step S91 of FIG. 9 is a step for examining whether there is access from terminal 110 of a customer (or terminal 110 at a dealership) to request an estimate. If an act of access is detected, then the program proceeds to step S92, and transmits an order image picture to the terminal 110. Next step S93 examines whether an order is received. If an order (including vehicle information on make and model of a vehicle, etc.) is inputted to the terminal 110 according to the order image picture, and received through communication network 109, then step S94 obtains information (including one or more photographs of a vehicle, optional parts, and explanation of the features of the vehicle, for example) according to the order from the customer, from the product database in storage section 155, and step S95 transmits the obtained information to the terminal 110. Then, step S96 examines whether the act of access is interrupted or not. If not, step S97 checks whether information items required for drawing up an estimate are inputted. If all the requisite information items are filled in, step S98 draws up an estimate, and step S99 transmits the estimate to the customer. After step S99, the program ends.

[0045] The order image picture at step S92 for estimation request presents a form to collect personal information about a customer and purchase-related information about purchase or preparation of purchase. The purchase-related information in this example includes order information about a product which a customer wants to buy, and terms and conditions of purchase. The order information of this example includes at least vehicle information about a vehicle the customer would like to buy. In this example, the personal information contains name, address, telephone number, and email address of a customer. The vehicle information contains make, engine type, grade, transmission type, exterior color, options,

trade-in, etc. The estimate image picture at step S99 contains vehicle information and estimate information. In this example, the estimate information contains vehicle base price, option price, tax, total amount, etc. The vehicle information contains information items specified by a customer, and additional vehicle specification data items such as transmission type, vehicle weight, passenger capacity, and dimensions.

[0046] FIG. 10 shows a procedure for assessment of a trade-in vehicle. Step S101 is a step for examining whether there is access from a terminal 110 of a customer (or a terminal 110 of a dealership) to request an assessment of a trade-in. If an act of access is detected, then the program proceeds to step S102, and transmits an order image picture to the customer. Next step S103 examines whether an order is received. If an order (including information on make, model and distance, etc.) is inputted to the terminal 110 according to the order image picture, and received through communication network 109, step S104 obtains information according to the order of the customer, from the used car database in storage section 156, and step S105 transmits the obtained information to the terminal 110. Then, step S106 examines whether the act of access is interrupted or not. If not, step S107 checks whether information items required for drawing up an assessment are filled in. If all the requisite information items are filled in, step S108 draws up an assessment, and step S109 transmits the assessment to the customer. After step S109, the program ends.

[0047] The order image picture at step S102 for request for assessment presents a form to collect personal information about a customer and purchase-related information about purchase or preparation of purchase. The purchase-related information in this example includes trade-in information about a trade-in vehicle. The personal information about the customer may include name, address,

telephone number, and email address of a customer. The trade-in information may include make, model, grade, transmission type, exterior color, options, quality of exterior, quality of interior, total distance of run, vehicle
5 body code number (or vehicle identification number), vehicle history, first registration date, displacement, fuel, model number, classification, maintenance record, owner's name, user's name, and term of validity. The assessment image picture at step S109 presents vehicle information
10 and assessment information. The assessment information may include assessed value, assessed items such as equipment, interior, exterior and assessment score. The vehicle information may include information items such as model, grade, vehicle specification data items, first
15 registration date, displacement, fuel, and base price. Step S103 may be arranged to assist a customer to input data items by providing information (such as optional parts or color) in accordance with data items already inputted by a customer.

20 **[0048]** FIG. 11 shows a procedure for performing credit calculation and credit examination. Step S111 is a step for examining whether there is access from a terminal 110 of a customer (or a terminal 110 of a dealership) to request credit calculation and credit examination report. If an act
25 of access is detected, then the program proceeds to step S112, and transmits an order image picture to the terminal 110. Next step S113 examines whether an order is received. If an order (including information on the number of payments, preferred payment type, and credit
30 information) is inputted to the terminal 110 according to the order image picture, and received through communication network 109, then step S116 examines whether the act of access is interrupted or not. If not, step S117 checks whether information items required for credit
35 calculation and credit examination are filled in. If all the requisite information items are filled in, step S118 prepares

credit calculation and credit examination report, and step S119 transmits the results to the customer. After step S119, the program ends.

5 **[0049]** The order image picture for request for credit at S112 presents a form to collect personal information about a customer and purchase-related information. In this example, the purchase-related information includes information about credit examination. The personal
10 information about the customer may include name, address, telephone number, and email address of a customer. The credit examination information may include credit type, the number of payments, the rate of interest, starting month of payment, bonus months, amount of money, place of work,
15 telephone number of the place of work, yearly income, residence (own house, rent, etc.). A credit calculation image picture at step S119 presents vehicle information, terms and examined items, and payment schedule. The vehicle information may include make and grade. The information on the terms and examined items may include
20 credit amount of money, credit type, the number of payments, the rate of interest, and bonus months. The payment schedule may contain the amount of first payment, monthly payment, the amount of payment of bonus month, and total amount.

25 **[0050]** The credit calculation and credit examination may be managed by two distinct systems. When the credit calculation and credit examination are dealt with by credit company system 121 as in FIG. 8, server system 108'
30 sends data to credit company system 121 and receives the results from credit company system 121.

[0051] FIG. 12 shows a procedure which server system 108 (or 108') can perform to assign an individual address to each customer. The procedure shown in FIG. 12 includes at least step S501 to receive a first act from a
35 customer; step S502 to obtain customer information; step S503 to perform a first sales support action in response to

the first act on the basis of the customer information; step S504 to assign an individual address to the customer; step S505 to memorize the individual address in a memory; step S506 to enable the customer to use the individual address
5 by offering the individual address to the customer; step S507 to receive an electronic message representing a second act from the customer if any; step S508 to check the electronic message by collating the destination address of the electronic message with the individual address
10 memorized in the memory; step S509 to perform a second sales support action in response to the second act if the destination address of the electronic message is in agreement with the individual address memorized in the memory; and step S510 to perform a third sales support
15 action if the destination address of the electronic message is not in agreement with the individual address memorized.

[0052] In this example, the first act is external manifestation of a customer's will or intention, such as a customer's order to buy goods or services or a customer's
20 request for estimation, assessment of a trade-in vehicle, or credit calculation to obtain information to determine whether to buy goods or services or not. In this example, an individual address is assigned when at least one of these customer's intentions is confirmed. The first act may be in
25 the form of an electronic message which can be transmitted from one place to another through a communication network such as the Internet. In this example, the second act is also external manifestation of a customer's will to alter at least one of the terms and conditions of the first
30 act or to cancel the first act. The second act may be a cancellation of a sales contract concluded as a result of the first act. In the example of FIG. 9, the first sales support action includes at least an operation to draw up an estimate, and an operation to transmit an estimate image
35 picture to a customer. In FIG. 10, the first sales support action includes at least an operation to draw up an

assessment, and an operation to transmit an assessment image picture to a customer. In FIG. 11, the first sales support action includes at least an operation to perform credit calculation and credit examination, and an operation to transmit the results to a customer. The second sales support action may include at least operations to fulfill the request of the second act whereas the third sales support action may include at least an operation to notify the customer of non-acceptance of the second act.

10 **[0053]** The first act of a customer may include an act to supply customer information in addition to manifestation of customer's intention, so that the act to supply customer information is indistinguishable from the manifestation of customer's intention. In such a case, steps S501 and S502
15 are united as a single step. Alternatively, step S502 may be performed before step S501 or simultaneously with step S501. Moreover, step S504 may be performed before step S503, or simultaneously with step S503. Steps S505 and S506 may be performed in a reverse order or
20 simultaneously.

[0054] FIG. 13 shows a procedure which can be performed in terminal 110 to obtain an individual address from server system 108. This procedure includes at least step S701 to transmit a first electronic message to an
25 online site (such as online shopping site) or an email address of server system 108; step S702 to transmit customer information; step S703 to receive a first sales support action; step S704 to receive an individual address assigned to the customer; step S705 to transmit a second
30 electronic message, such as email message, according to the need, to server system 108 by using the individual address; and step S706 to receive a first response (such as a second sale support action) in response to the second message if the destination address of the second electronic
35 message is in agreement with the individual address, or a second response (such as a third sales support action) if

the destination address of the second electronic message is not in agreement with the individual address.

[0055] This application is based on a prior Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-186253. The entire contents of a Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-186253 with a filing date of June 21, 2000 are hereby incorporated by reference.

[0056] Although the invention has been described above by reference to certain embodiments of the invention, the invention is not limited to the embodiments described above. Modifications and variations of the embodiments described above will occur to those skilled in the art in light of the above teachings. The scope of the invention is defined with reference to the following claims.

[0057] The present invention has been described above purely by way of example and modifications can be made within the spirit of the invention which extends to equivalents of the features described. The invention also consists in any individual features described or implicit herein or shown or implicit in the drawings or any combination of any such features or any generalization of any such features or combinations.

[0058] The present invention can be implemented by a network of processing apparatuses interconnected by any type of communications network. The network can comprise the internet, an extranet, an intranet, a local area network or a wireless network for example. Any suitable communications protocol supported by the communications network can be used.

[0059] The processing apparatus can comprise dedicated hardware or programmable hardware or even a combination. The programmable hardware can comprise any suitable programmable device such as general purpose computer. In order to configure the programmable device to operate in accordance with the invention, suitable program code can be provided to the device using any conventional

carrier medium, e.g. floppy disk, CD-ROM, tape device, or
programmable logic device or a transient carrier medium
e.g. electrical, optical, microwave, or radio frequency
signal. An example of the application of a transient signal
5 is the downloading of program code over a network e.g. the
internet.

Industrial Applicability

10 **[0060]** The present invention is applicable at least to
sale of various goods and services, various other business
activities, and various automated business data processing
technologies.

CLAIMS

1. A customer information control system comprising:
an address assigning section to assign an individual
address to a customer, to receive an electronic message
5 from the customer;
a memory section to store the individual address;
a communicating section to receive an electronic
message from the customer; and
a checking section to examine whether a destination
10 address of the electronic message is in agreement with the
individual address stored in the memory section.
2. The customer information control system as claimed in
Claim 1, wherein the address assigning section assigns an
15 individual address uniquely to each customer; and the
memory section stores the individual address of each
customer in association with customer information on that
customer.
- 20 3. The customer information control system as claimed in
Claim 2, wherein the address assigning section assigns an
individual address to each customer in response to a first
act of the customer, and enables the customer to express a
second act subsequent to the first act by using the
25 individual address.
4. The customer information control system as claimed in
Claim 3, wherein the memory section stores the individual
address as a pair with the customer information for each
30 customer; and the checking section examines the
destination address of the electronic message to effect the
second act and the customer information used in the
electronic message to effect the second act, to determine
whether the destination address and the customer
35 information of the electronic message to effect the second

act are in agreement with the individual address and the customer information stored as a pair in the memory section.

5 5. The customer information control system as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the address assigning section causes the communicating section to notify each customer of the individual address dedicated to the customer to enable the customer to express the second act, by sending an email
10 message having the individual address as a return address of the email message.

6. The customer information control system as claimed in Claim 5, wherein the customer information comprises a
15 customer address; the memory section stores the individual address as a pair with a customer address; and the checking section examines the destination address and a sender address of an email message to effect the second act, to determine whether the destination address and the
20 sender address of the email message to effect the second act are in agreement with the individual address and the customer address stored as a pair in the memory section.

7. The customer information control system as claimed in
25 any of Claims 3 to 6, wherein the customer information control system is a sales support system, and further comprises a sales support section to obtain customer information on each customer, and to perform a responsive sales support action based on the customer information in
30 response to the first act of each customer.

8. The customer information control system as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the sales support section responds to the first act in the form of a computer-readable electronic
35 message for a sales contract, by performing the sales

support action to complete the sales contract; and wherein the sales support section is configured to perform the responsive sales support action in accordance with the customer information which comprises personal information and purchase-related information on a sales contract; and the memory section is configured to store the individual address in association with the personal information and purchase-related information for each customer.

9. The customer information control system as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the sales support section is configured to arrange a date of delivery in response to the first act of each customer for a sales contract, and to notify each customer of the date of deliver for the customer.

10. The customer information control system as claimed in Claim 8 or 9, wherein the purchase-related information comprises order information; the sales support section comprises a product data storage section to store data on products; a data management section to retrieve data on a product specified by the order information, from the product data storage section; and an estimating section to draw up an estimate of the product in accordance with the information obtained from the product data storage section.

11. The customer information control system as claimed in Claim 8, 9 or 10, wherein the purchase-related information comprises trade-in information on a trade-in vehicle; the sales support section comprises a used car data storage section to store information on pre-owned vehicles; a data management section to retrieve data on a trade-in vehicle specified by the trade-in information, from the trade-in data storage section; and an assessing section to draw up an assessment of the trade-in vehicle in accordance with the data obtained from the trade-in data storage section.

12. The customer information control system as claimed in Claim 8, 9, 10 or 11, wherein the purchase-related information comprises credit information on credit for a customer, and the sales support section comprises an
5 examining section to determine whether to allow credit or not, in accordance with the personal information and credit information.

10 13. The customer information control system as claimed in Claim 8, 9, 10, 11 or 12, wherein the customer information control system comprises a server system which comprises said address assigning section, said memory section, said communicating section, and said checking section, and at
15 least one terminal comprising an input section to input the personal information and purchase-related information, and a communicating section to transmit the personal information and purchase-related information to the server system.

20 14. A customer information control method comprising:
assigning an individual address to a customer;
memorizing the individual address; and
examining a subsequent electronic message, if
received, to determine whether a destination address of the
25 subsequent electronic message is in agreement with the individual address memorized.

- 15. The customer information control method as claimed in Claim 14,
30 wherein an individual address is uniquely assigned to each of customers in response to a first act of the customer, and memorized in association with customer information on the customer; and
wherein the customer information control method
35 further comprises:

receiving information representing the first act of each customer, and customer information on the customer; and

- 5 enabling each customer to express a second act subsequent to the first act by using the individual address assigned to the customer.

10 16. The customer information control method as claimed in Claim 15, wherein the customer information comprises a customer address, the individual address is memorized as a pair with the customer address, and the destination address and a sender address of the subsequent electronic message are examined to determine whether the destination address and the sender address match the
15 individual address and customer address memorized as a pair; and wherein the customer is notified of the individual address by sending, to the customer address, an email message having the individual address as a return address.

20 17. The customer information control method as claimed in Claim 15 or 16, wherein the customer information control method further comprises:

- performing a first responsive sales support action in response to the first act from each customer; and
25 performing a second responsive sales support action in response to the subsequent electronic message from the customer only when the destination address of the subsequent electronic message is in agreement with the individual address.

30

18. The customer information control method as claimed in Claim 17, wherein the customer information control method further comprises performing a third responsive sales support action in response to the subsequent

electronic message from the customer when the destination address of the subsequent electronic message is not in agreement with the individual address.

5 19. The customer information control method as claimed in Claim 18, wherein the first act of each customer is in the form of a preceding electronic message to perform a transaction, the subsequent electronic message is an email message to alter the transaction, and the third
10 responsive sales support action comprises an operation to send an email message notifying the customer that alteration of the transaction is not entered.

20. A computer program for customer information control,
15 the computer program comprising:
a first program section of assigning an individual address in response to a computer-readable first electronic message;
a second program section of memorizing the individual
20 address;
a third program section of enabling the customer to send a computer-readable second electronic message to the individual address assigned to the customer; and
a fourth program section of checking a destination
25 address of the computer-readable second electronic message, to determine whether the destination address is memorized as the individual address.

21. The computer program as claimed in Claim 20,
30 wherein the computer program is embodied in a computer-readable medium.

22. An apparatus for customer information control, the apparatus comprising:

means for receiving information representing a first customer's electronic message addressed from a customer to a vendor;

means for assigning an individual address to the customer in response to the customer's first message;

means for recording the individual address assigned to the customer;

means for supplying the individual address to the customer;

means for checking a customer's second electronic message, if received, to determine whether a destination address of the second electronic message is recorded as the individual address;

means for performing a first responsive operation when the destination address matches the individual address memorized; and

means for performing a second responsive operation when the destination address is not memorized as the individual address.

23. A transaction method comprising:

transmitting a first electronic message to make a transaction, to an online business site;

obtaining, from the online business site, an individual address uniquely assigned in response to the electronic message;

sending a second electronic message to the individual address; and

receiving a business action responsive to the second electronic message, from the online business site if a destination address of the second electronic message is in agreement with the individual address assigned to the customer.

24. The transaction method as claimed in Claim 23,
wherein the first electronic message is a first email
message from a customer address to an email address of
the online business site, the individual address is uniquely
5 assigned to the customer address, and the second
electronic message is a second email message from the
customer address to the individual address.

25. The transaction method as claimed in Claim 23,
10 wherein the first electronic message is transmitted by
accessing the online business site which is a web site, to
request information relating to the transaction; the
transaction method further comprises supplying information
about a customer address to the online business site; and
15 the second electronic message is an email message sent
from the customer address to the individual address.

26. A terminal apparatus comprising:
an input section to input personal information about a
20 customer and purchase-related information about
purchase;
a communication section to transmit the personal
information and the purchase-related information to a
server through a communication network, and to obtain an
25 individual address assigned uniquely to the customer; and
a processor section to transmit an email message
from a customer address to the individual address.

27. Computer program code for controlling a computer to
30 carry out the method of any of Claims 14~19 or 23~25.

28. A carrier medium for carrying the computer program
code according to Claim 27.

35 29. Customer information control equipment comprising:

receiving means for receiving a first message from a customer,

a processor for assigning to the customer an individual address,

5 storage means for storing the individual address,
transmitting means for transmitting the individual address to the customer,

wherein, if a further message is received from the customer by the receiving means, the processor is
10 configured to compare the destination address to which the further message is sent, with the individual address stored in the storage means for the customer, and to perform a first response if the destination address matches the individual address or to perform a second response if the
15 destination address does not match the individual address.

30. A customer information control server, comprising:

a network interface connecting said server to a network to which there is connected at least one customer
20 terminal;

a storage device storing customer data including an individual address for said at least one customer;

instruction memory storing computer implementable instructions; and

25 a processor operable to read and process said customer data in accordance with said instructions stored in said instruction memory, wherein said instructions stored in said instruction memory comprise instructions for controlling said processor to

30 receive a first message from said customer via said network interface;

assign an individual address to said customer;

input said individual address for said customer to said storage device;

35 transmit said individual address to said customer terminal via said network interface;

receive a further message from said customer terminal via said network interface;

5 compare a destination address of said further message with said individual address stored by said storage device; and

perform a first response if said destination address matches said individual address or to perform a second response if said destination address does not match said individual address.

10

FIG.1

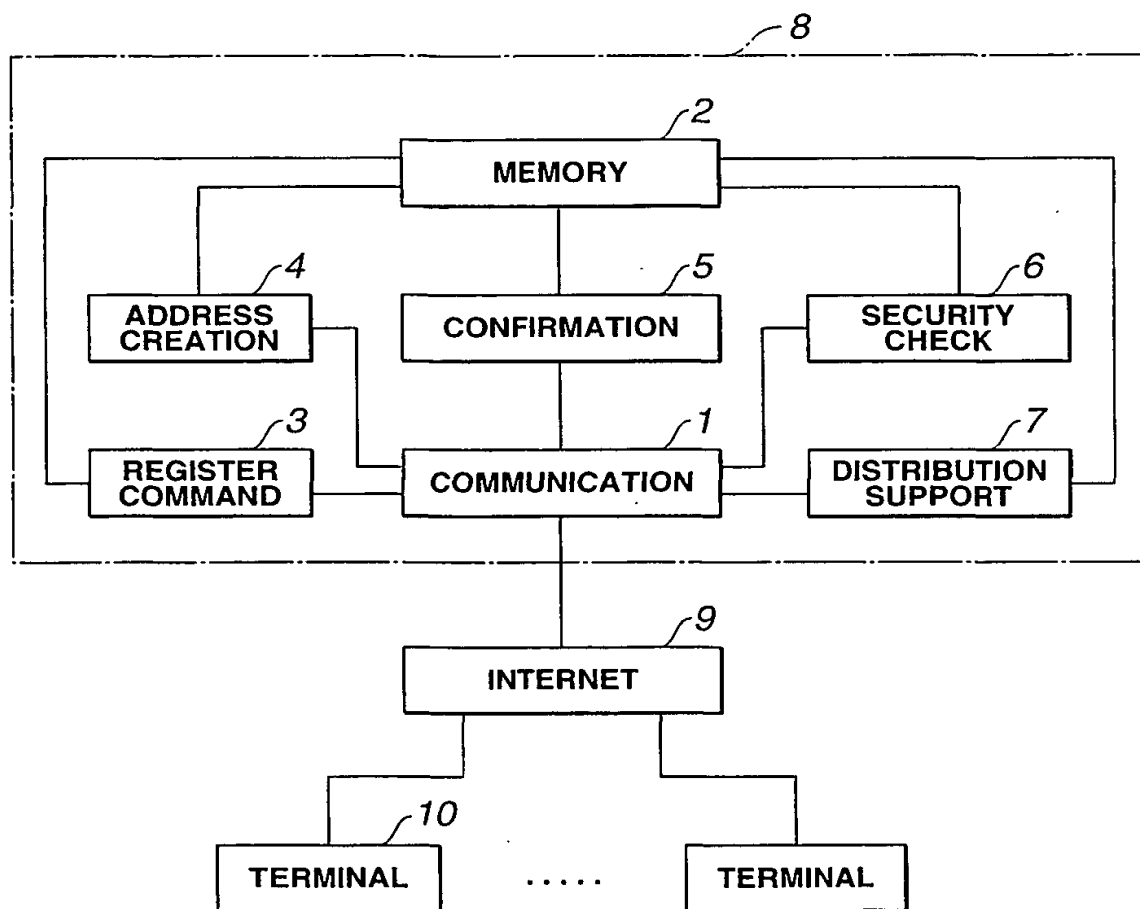


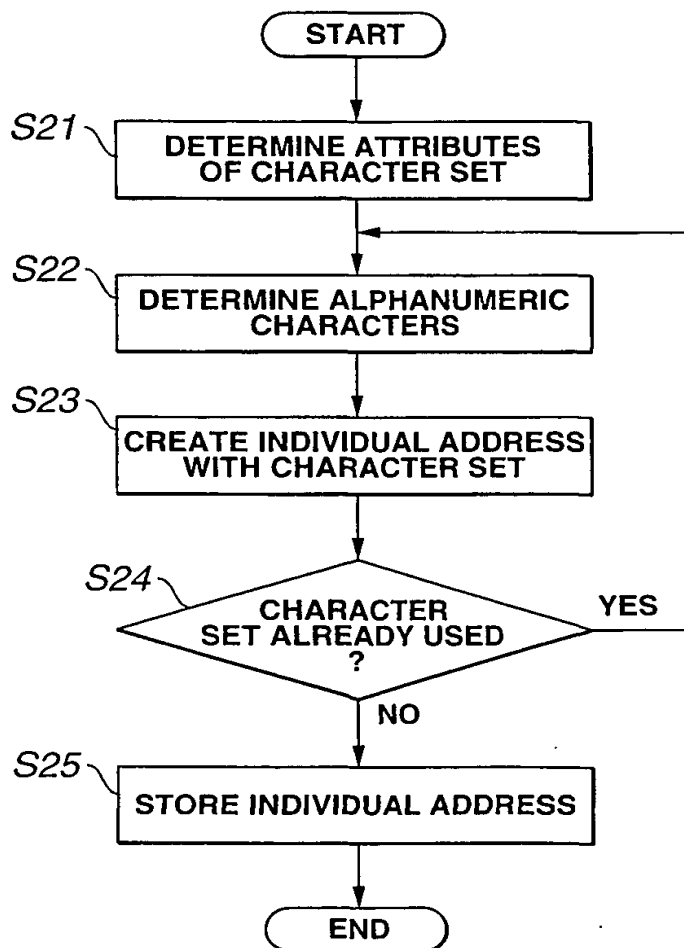
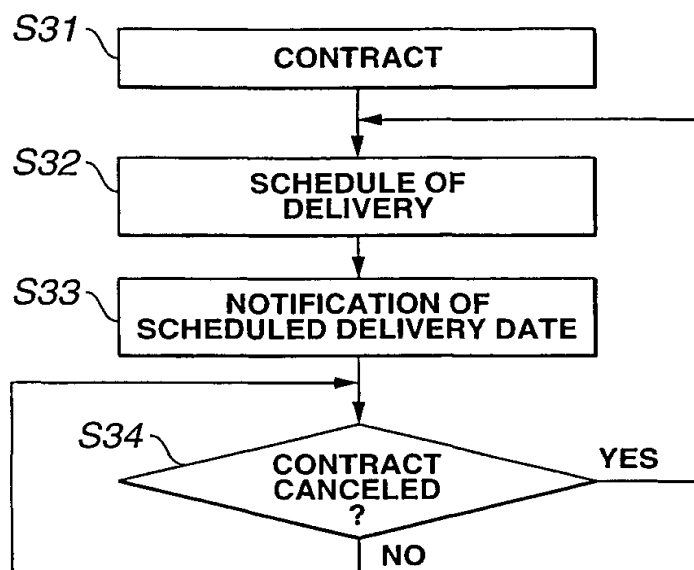
FIG.2

FIG.3**FIG.4**

CUSTOMER	SCHEDULED DELIVERY DATE
A	JUNE 2
B	JUNE 5
C	JUNE 9
D	JUNE 10
E	JUNE 11
F	JUNE 13

FIG.5

CUSTOMER	SCHEDULED DELIVERY DATE
A	JUNE 2
B	JUNE 5
C	JUNE 9
E	JUNE 10
F	JUNE 11

FIG.6

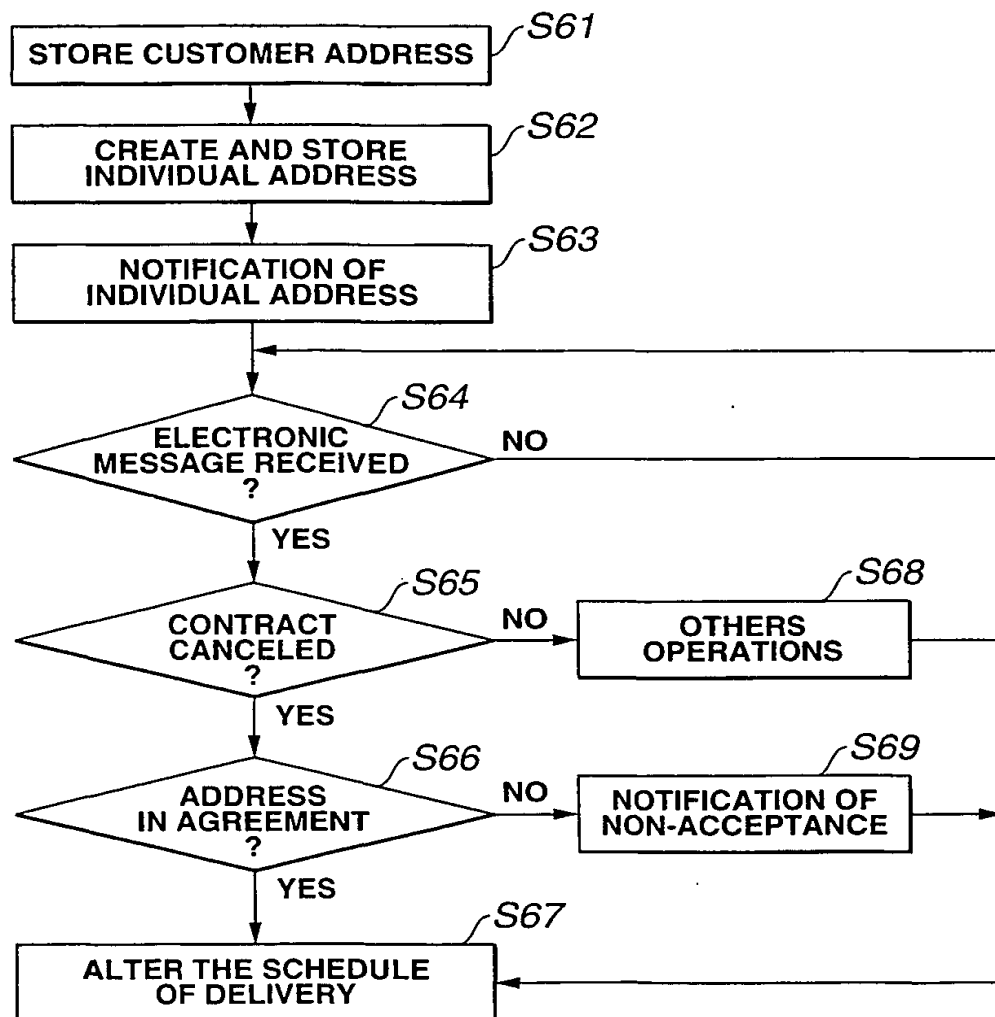


FIG.7

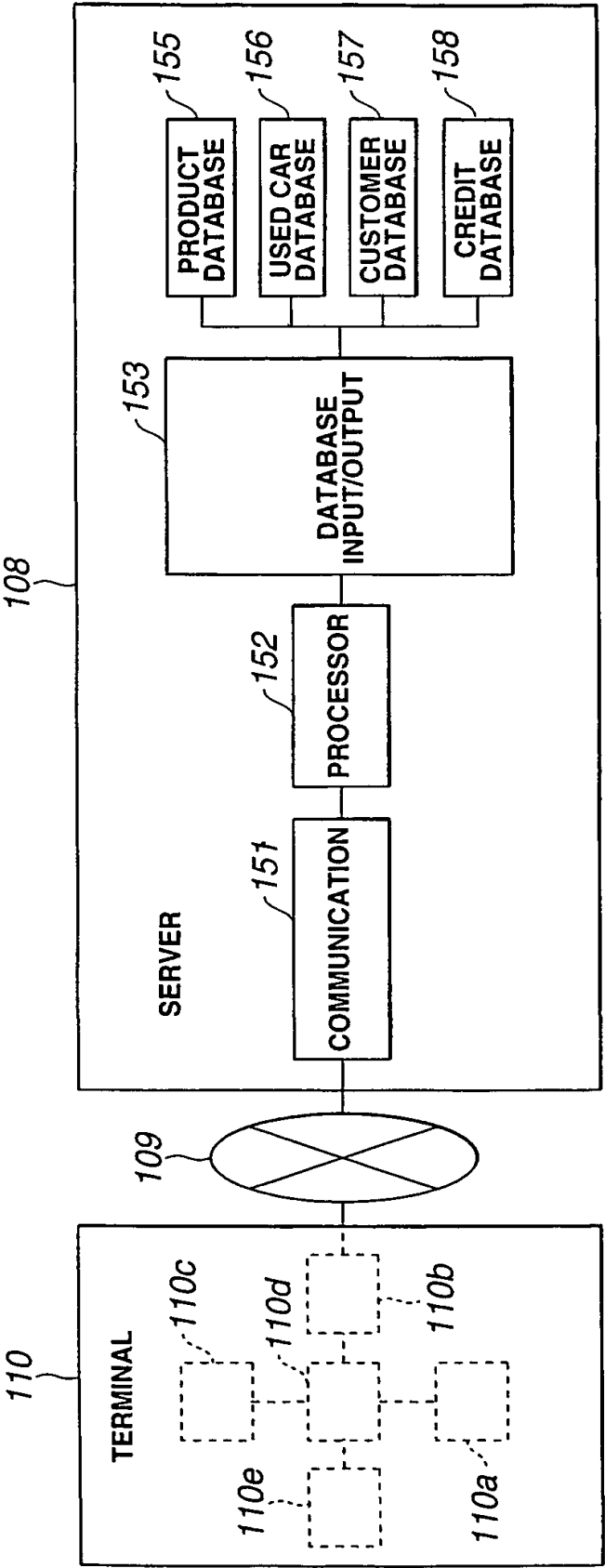


FIG.8

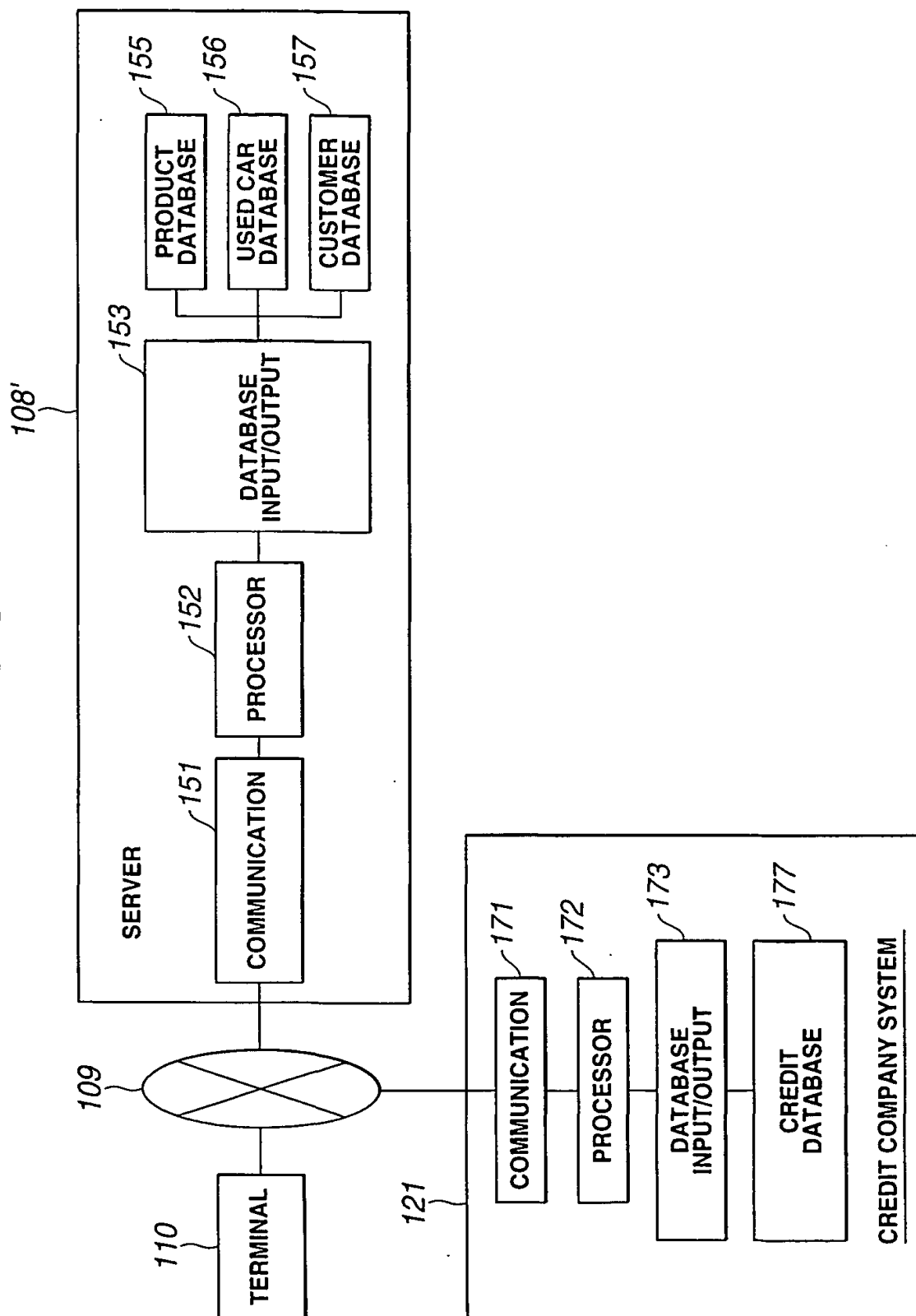


FIG.9

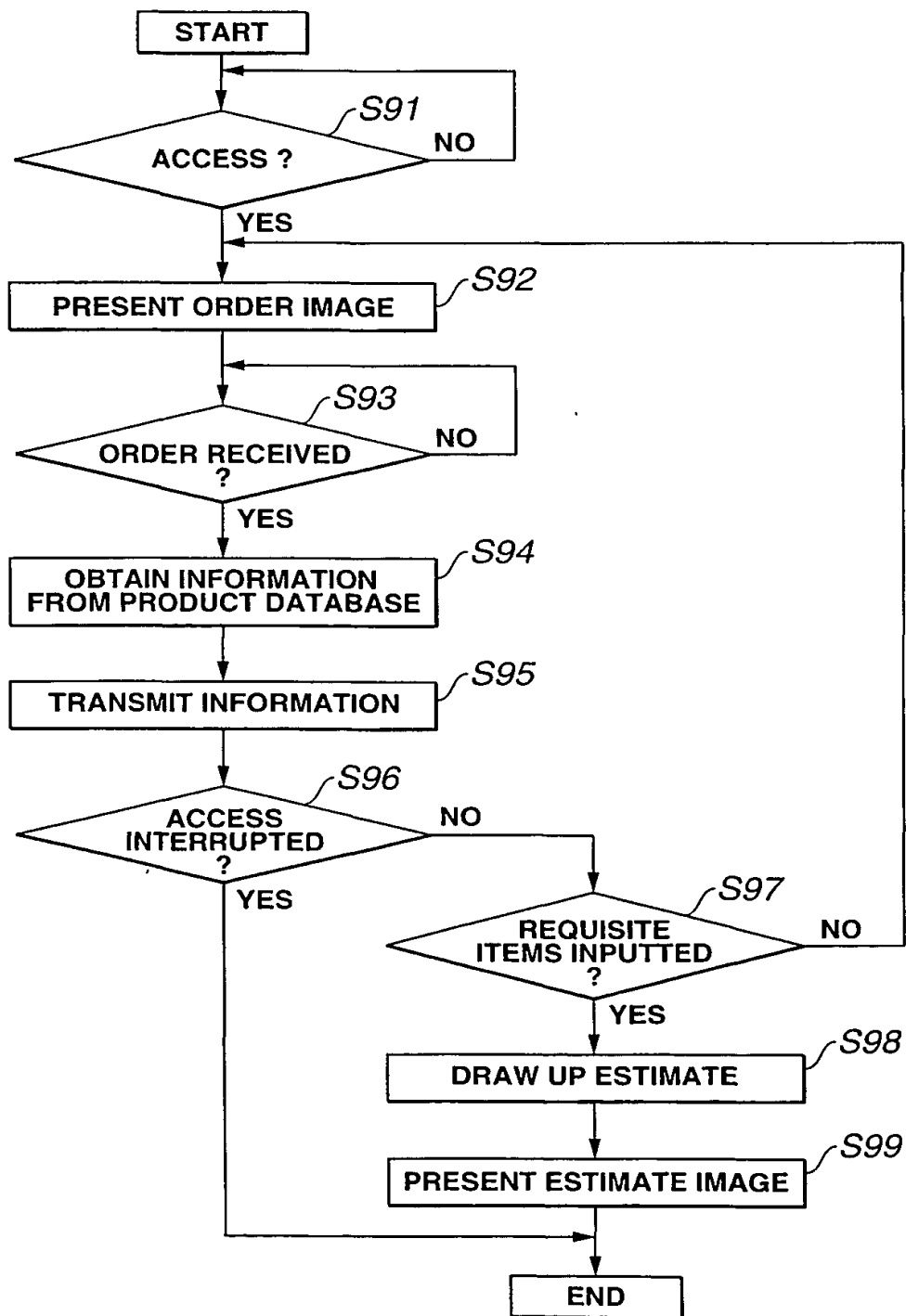


FIG.10

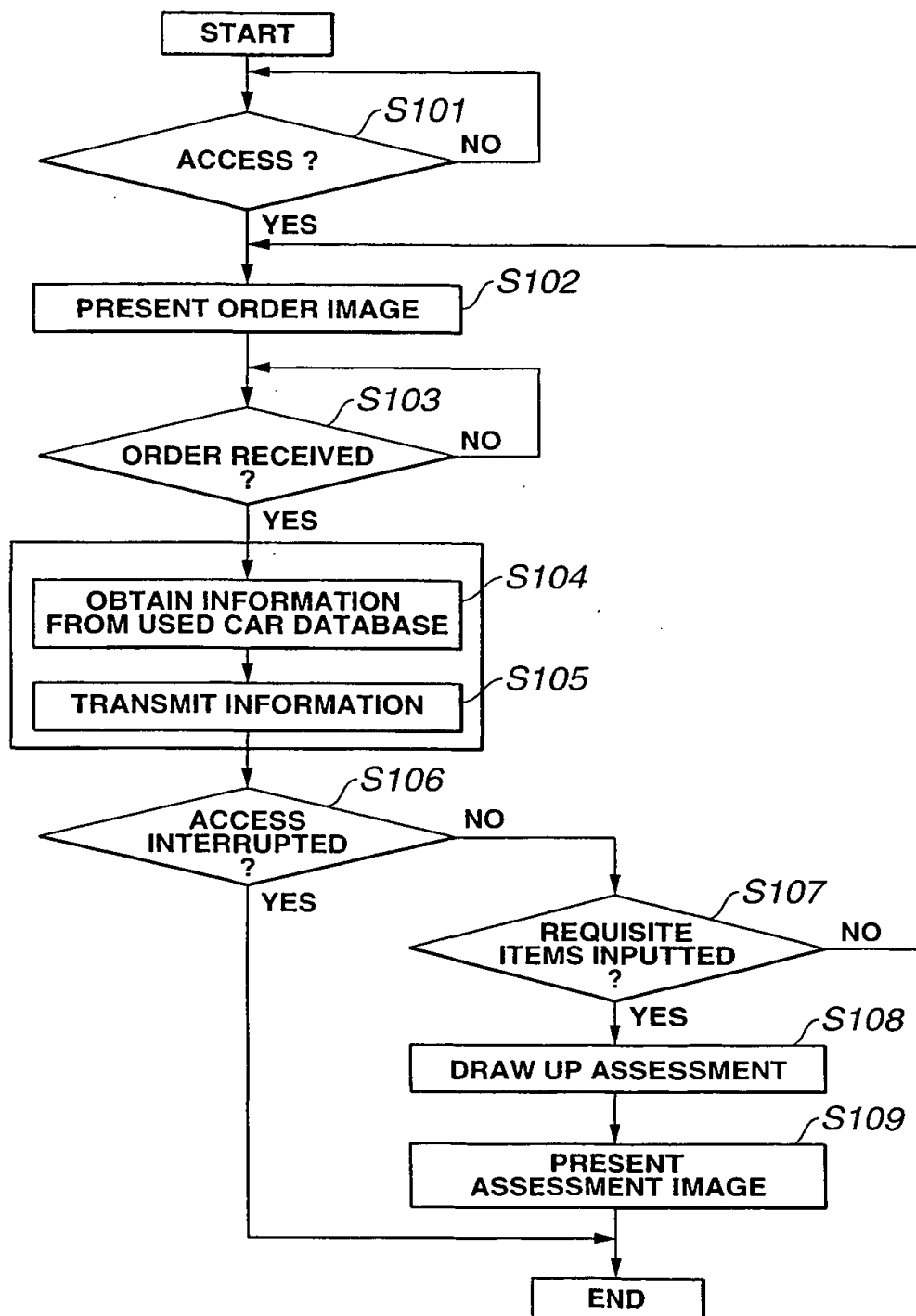


FIG.11

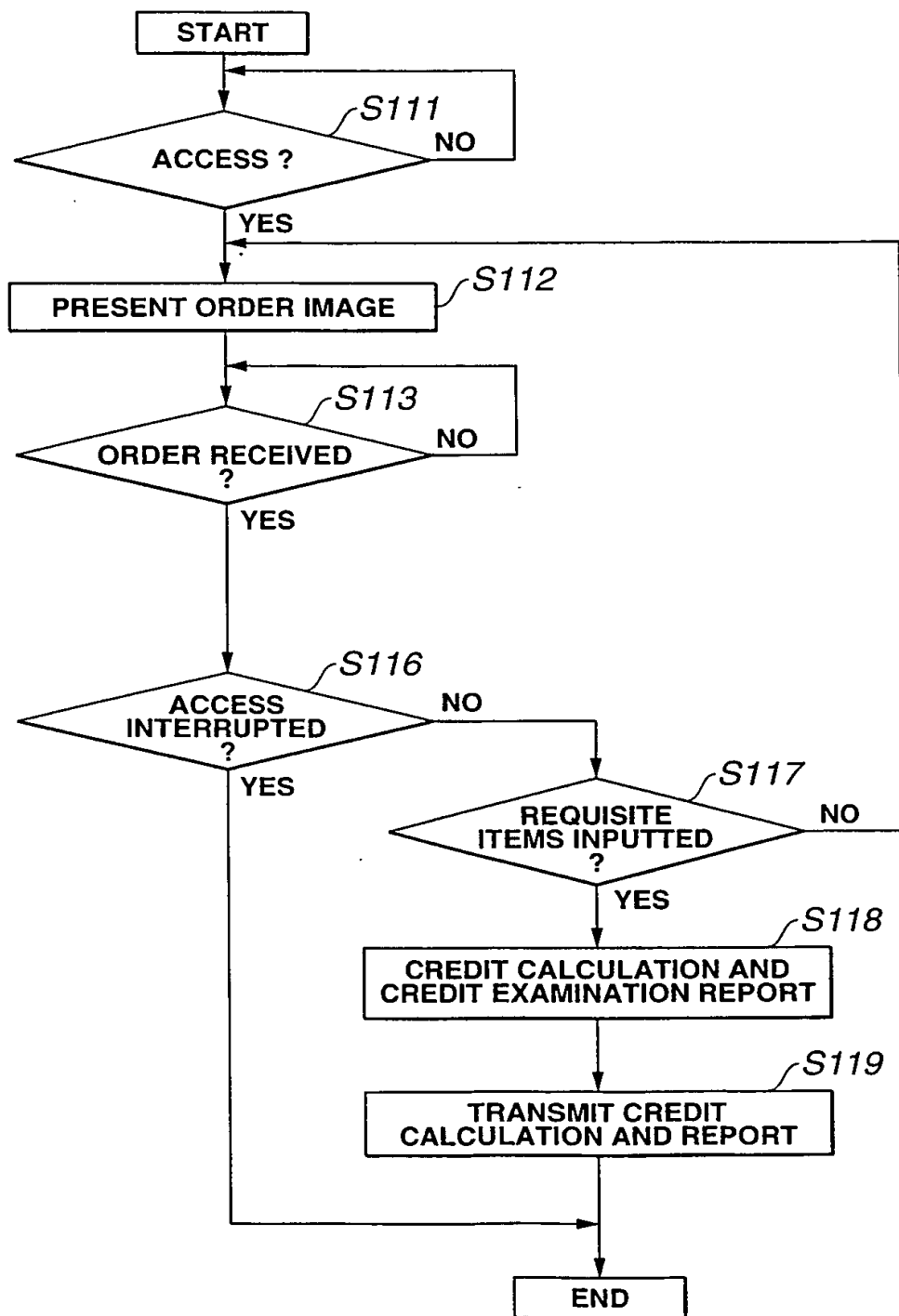


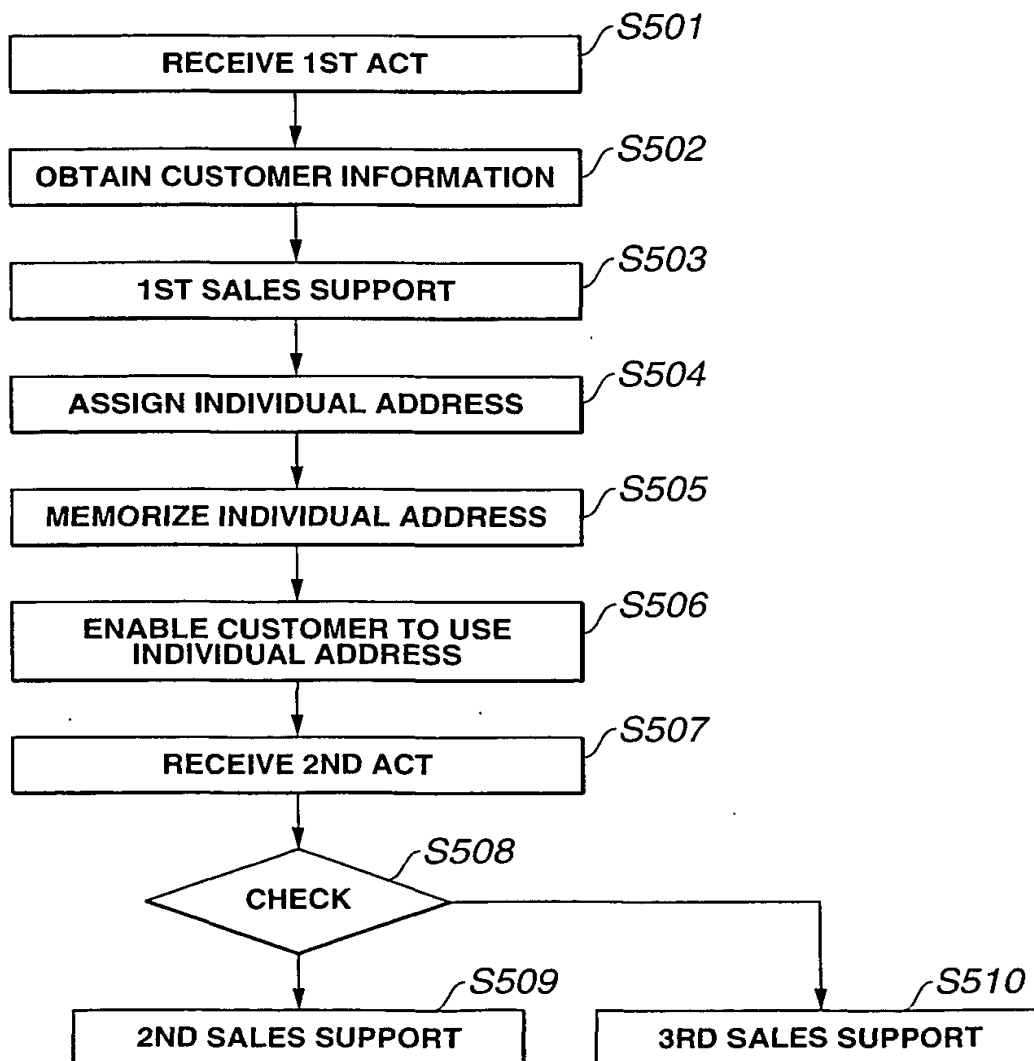
FIG.12

FIG.13